

Miscellaneous Trade Bill (MTB) Process

The Committee on Ways and Means initiates the MTB process by issuing a public notice inviting Members of Congress to introduce bills by a set deadline. The bills are typically temporary duty suspensions on narrowly defined products but can be on any trade matter. They will be aggregated at the end of the process into a single Miscellaneous Trade Bill. Interested individuals that wish to participate should contact their Congressional representatives in both the House and Senate. The following steps are designed to streamline the MTB process.

- For temporary duty suspensions or reductions, determine the correct technical format and physical description of a product following the style of the Harmonized Tariff Schedule. A product should be described precisely and include a correct 8-digit tariff line so that a customs official can identify the product readily at the border. Chemical products should have a Chemical Abstracts Service (CAS) registry number in the description, if available. Applicable dyes, pigments and other coloring matter should be identified by a Colour Index name. Avoid using trade names for products.

It is advisable to avoid defining a product by its end use in such a manner that the product can be identified only by tracking the product after it leaves the border. For example, one should not draft a duty suspension on “steel screws used in furniture” because customs officials would be unable at the border to distinguish those particular steel screws from any others. One would need to find a unique and functional feature of the screws for description purposes.

- Member offices should contact the Congressional Liaison at the U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC) before introducing their bills in order to obtain technical assistance on their format. The ITC may suggest multiple changes both then and after the bill’s introduction, especially on complex chemical names or new products and their classification.
- Members should communicate with Legislative Counsel about drafting a bill several weeks before the deadline for introducing the bill in order to give time for drafting, as there is frequently a rush of requests near the deadline.
- It has been the Committee’s policy that to be included in the Committee’s MTB, a duty suspension must raise no objection, cost under \$500,000 per year, and be administrable. In the event a particular bill exceeds the threshold, the Committee may redraft the bill accordingly such as by limiting the scope of the temporary duty measure, by staging the rate decreases, or by changing the bill into a duty reduction rather than complete suspension.
- Soon after the deadline, Ways and Means will issue an advisory including all qualifying provisions and request public comment from all interested parties. Simultaneously, ITC and the Department of Commerce will research the revenue loss of the bill and whether domestic production and/or opposition to the bill can be identified.